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G/TIP FOR LAGON, FLECK, AND SIGMON  
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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [SNAR](#) [KJUS](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [AR](#)  
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: VISITING G/TIP AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH TIP  
ACTIVISTS AND OFFICIALS

11. (SBU) Summary. On June 19, Ambassador Wayne hosted a TIP roundtable in honor of Ambassador-at-large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Mark Lagon to discuss Argentina's efforts in the fight against TIP. Participants included working-level GOA officials, NGOs, and a representative from the Catholic Church. Participants observed that TIP is now an issue that is on the national public agenda. However, their views on the new anti-TIP law were mixed, with the GOA and the Church calling it a step in the right direction, and the NGOs considering the law insufficient, particularly in regard to the issue of victim's consent. All noted the need for: 1) greater interagency coordination in the fight against TIP; 2) advanced TIP training of judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officials; 3) greater resources devoted to victims' protection and assistance. One NGO offered a dire view on the use of sweatshop labor in Argentina, but two participants privately told us that, although forced labor is a problem, they considered that NGO's description as sensationalist. END SUMMARY.

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On the Right Track, But Still a Long Way to Go  
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12. (SBU) On June 19, Ambassador Wayne hosted a TIP roundtable in honor of Ambassador-at-large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Mark Lagon to discuss Argentina's efforts in the fight against TIP. Participants included working-level GOA officials, NGOs, and a representative of the Catholic Church. Ambassador Lagon kicked off the discussion by explaining that the purpose of his visit to Argentina was to encourage authorities to fight human trafficking and seek ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in this effort. He said that recent passage of the anti-trafficking law was a positive step and that now the GOA needs to focus on implementing the law, "which is the hard part". He asked participants to share their views on the GOA response in combating TIP.

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Participants see Progress, But More Needs to be Done  
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13. (SBU) Participants agreed that years of public awareness campaigns by the International Organization for Migration, the GOA, the media, and the civil sector have finally put TIP on the national public agenda. They said that this was a positive development, as the problem was "hidden and ignored" for many years. Reviews of Argentina's new TIP law, however, were mixed. GOA participants and a Catholic Church representative noted that the law was a step in the right direction. Others who criticized the law considered that the only positive element of the law was that it made human trafficking a federal crime. One participant called the law an act of "smoke and mirrors" since the burden of proof falls on the adult victims and not on the traffickers.

¶4. (SBU) They also noted the need for greater interagency coordination and cooperation on the issue. One NGO participant observed that "interagency coordination is nonexistent" and complained that the GOA often turns to NGOS to provide assistance to trafficking victims since the GOA lacks an action plan and the resources to provide victim services itself. A Church representative pointed out that the GOA cannot combat the problem alone, and that it should work with NGOs to effectively address the problem. One GOA official who works on TIP investigations expressed frustration with the highly bureaucratic nature of seeking international cooperation in TIP cases beyond Argentina's borders.

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Judicial Sector and Law Enforcement Need Training  
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¶5. (SBU) In the area of prosecution, a GOA participant praised the work that federal prosecutors have been doing in this area, but criticized the actions of many federal and provincial judges. All participants agreed that training government, judicial, and law enforcement officials at the working level would be paramount to the successful implementation of the anti-TIP law.

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Resources for Victim Assistance Inadequate  
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¶6. (SBU) NGO participants expressed frustration that neither they, nor the GOA, have sufficient resources to provide adequate victims' assistance. One participant criticized the Argentine Ministry of Justice (MOJ) for its lack of cooperation in the area of victim protection and assistance. Another alleged that the Minister of Justice Anibal Fernandez was making all GOA anti-trafficking efforts

go through his office, personally, and not including other government agencies that have been helpful in this area, such as the MOJ's own Human Rights Secretariat. Still another noted that while the federal government is trying to define which agencies will take the lead on anti-TIP efforts, provinces, such as Santa Fe, Tucuman, and Neuquen are moving forward in developing mechanisms to assist victims and prosecute traffickers. All noted the need to allocate adequate resources for anti-trafficking efforts in order to make the law work.

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Views on Forced Labor in Argentina  
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¶7. (SBU) Turning to the issue of forced labor in Argentina, a representative from La Alameda, an NGO and labor cooperative comprised of former forced labor victims at great length painted a highly pessimistic picture of sweatshop labor in Argentina. He alleged that most urban centers in Argentina use sweatshop labor, and that his organization has worked with the Buenos Aires City Ombudsman's Office to file complaints against 85 brand name garment manufacturers on TIP and forced labor charges. He asserted that sweatshops are often used to "launder drug money and claimed that many sweatshops are also drug kitchens with forced labor victims sometimes serving as drug mules. He also accused the GOA of covering up TIP crimes while pretending to fight human traffickers at the same time. He criticized the GOA's Patria Grande plan, which was designed to normalize the status of over a million undocumented workers in Argentina, claiming that the plan helped traffickers avoid penalties for employing undocumented workers during labor inspections. (Comment: While this organization has had a strong working relationship with the Buenos Aires City Ombudsman's Office, two participants privately told POL FSN that some of their claims tend toward the sensationalist. End comment.)

¶8. (SBU) In closing, Ambassador Lagon thanked participants for their views and stressed the need for both countries to continue working together as partners in the fight against modern-day slavery. He stressed that one of his main messages worldwide is that governments need to work with, trust, and support NGOs as assets and partners, something that even democratic governments must do better. He encouraged all participants to remain committed to fighting this crime, regardless of the obstacles.

19. (U) This cable was cleared by G/TIP.

WAYNE